

Reminiscences, historical and personal /

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REMINISCENCES; HISTORICAL AND PERSONAL. ANNUAL ADDRESS, BY HON. H. H. SIBLEY, FEB. 1ST 1856.

In the note from the Secretary of this Society, inviting me to deliver the Annual Address, there was contained an intimation that the state of the country now comprised within our territorial limits, from the year 1819, when a Military Post was first established at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers, until 1849, when Congress gave to Minnesota a distinct existence and a name, would be an appropriate subject. I have acted upon that suggestion in part only; not having confined myself to the particular period referred to, nor have I attempted anything like a continuous narrative of events. On the contrary, I have picked up a waif here and there, as furnished from memory, or otherwise brought within my reach, and I have enunciated some opinions of my own, which will be found not to accord with those generally entertained by the community at large.

ANTE-HISTORIC PERIOD.

While reviewing what is usually termed the early history of Minnesota—which has reference to a time subsequent to its discovery by white men—the mind is naturally led to speculate upon the condition of things as they existed at a much more remote period, and before the present race of red men acquired possession of this country. That the entire West was inhabited by a more civilized people than the Indians, we do not learn from tradition, nor have we the testimonials even of rude hieroglyphics, which may be deciphered sooner or later by the antiquarian. Nevertheless, there is other evidence of the fact, of an indisputable character. In the bowels of the earth there have been sought for and found, the relics of a past age. Earthen vessels of convenient form—weapons and implements of labor made from copper—other articles never fashioned by Indian hands

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—together with the proofs of mechanical skill in the copper mines of Lake Superior lately discovered, where masses of that metal of many tons weight have been raised from their beds, and wooden supports introduced beneath them with a view to their removal—these are a few of the evidences which satisfy us of the existence of a race long since, in the region now occupied by us, who were far superior to the Indian tribes, but whose fate is left entirely to conjecture.

Fancy may picture to us communities of simple and industrious people, unwarlike in their character, happy in the possession of a fertile and beautiful country, and blessed with all the comforts of life, suddenly and successfully invaded, overwhelmed and exterminated by hordes of merciless savages, leaving behind them no other traces of their history than are afforded by a few specimens of their ingenuity in the mechanic arts. The mystery which envelops their fate will never be penetrated unless indeed there should be discovered, at a future day, some record which has hitherto baffled the diligent search of the historian.

THE INDIAN CHARACTER.

The character of the wild race who succeeded them in the possession of the Mississippi Valley is well portrayed by Alison in his partial, but eloquent, "History of Europe." 459 He describes the North American Indian as "neither the child of Japhet, daring, industrious, indefatigable, exploring the world by his enterprise and subduing it by his exertions; nor the offspring of Ishmael, sober, ardent, enduring, traversing the desert on his steed, and issuing forth at appointed intervals from his solitudes to punish and regenerate mankind. He is the hunter of the forest; skilled to perfection in the craft necessary for that primitive occupation, but incapable of advancing beyond it. Civilization in vain endeavored to throw its silken fetters over his limbs; he avoids the smiling plantation, and flies in horror before the advancing hatchet of the woodman. He does well to shun the approach of the European race; he can neither endure its fatigues, nor withstand its temptations; and faster than before the sword and the bayonet his race is melting under the fire-water, the first gift, and last curse of civilization."

TRIBAL CONDITION OF THE INDIANS.

It is not my intention to expatiate at length upon this topic, but in the Annual Address of your Society, a passing glance may be permitted, at the tribal condition of that people who have so long roamed through our forests and our prairies, and who are now disappearing under the operation of the same influences which long since swept their Eastern brethren from the earth.

The subdivisions of the respective Dakotas and Algonquin stocks have been opposed to each other for centuries, Tradition, as well as the testimony of the early writers upon this country, informs us that active hostilities have existed between them from time immemorial, except when occasional temporary truce has been agreed upon by the parties. Sometimes it has happened that some of the offshoots from the parent stem have combined with its enemies 460 against it. Thus the Assineboines, a revolted tribe of the Dakotas, have allied themselves with the Chippewas against them. On the other hand, the Sacs and Foxes, of Algonquin extraction, were formerly on such friendly terms with the Dakotas that with them they made furious war upon the Chippewas. These were, however, but signal exceptions to the general rule. Not one whit more bitter was the hate of Hamilcar to the Roman name, when he compelled his son Hannibal to swear eternal hostility to it upon the altar, than is that which is harbored by Dakota against Chippewa, and Chippewa against Dakota even to this day.

From the information we can gather of the number of Indians in the country now known as Minnesota, it is not probable that it has undergone any serious increase or diminution for a century or more, until within the last few years. The natural increase has about kept pace with the deaths from disease, which, in a healthy land like this, could never have been great, while the lives lost in battle were fewer in number than has been generally supposed. The wars between the Indian tribes are not of a sanguinary character, which distinguish those waged between European nations. Occasionally, and at long intervals, an entire camp, taken at disadvantage, has been destroyed. Judging from my own

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observation, and from statistics of a reliable nature, I am convinced that the lives sacrificed in the petty contests between the Dakotas and Chippewas have not amounted, in the aggregate, to an annual average of fifty, for the past century. The partisan who leads an expedition against an enemy is exceedingly careful of the lives of his men, for his reputation as a medicine-man or prophet, and his influence as a leader, depend entirely upon the amount of injury he can inflict upon the foe without any corresponding sacrifice on his own side. Again, a war party, whether large or small, almost invariably retrace their steps after taking one or more scalps at the first onset. They seek to strike no second blow, unless urged forward by the pressure of some peculiar and extreme exasperation.

RELIGION OF THE DAKOTAS,

The religion of the Dakotas is a mere myth. It has been often asserted that the Indian race are monotheists, and therefore far in advance of other pagans who believe in a multiplicity of deities; that they look forward also to a future state and to its retributions. I regret to be obliged to express an opinion on this subject, which must conflict with such favorable impressions. The belief attributed to the Eastern tribes, of happy hunting grounds for the good, and wastes devoid of game for the bad, in another sphere of existence, finds no response in the breast of a Dakota. He seeks to propitiate what he calls the Great Spirit, and a multitude of minor spirits, especially those embodied in oval shaped stones, by sacrifices of tobacco and other trifling articles, not because he hopes or cares for a reward in a higher state of being, but because he deprecates the visitations of their anger upon earth, in the form of disease, accident or death to himself or his family. I have no reason to believe that any Dakota, among the very many with whom I have conversed on the subject, was ever deterred from the commission of a crime by a fear of punishment in another world, nor have I been able to satisfy myself that their impressions of a future state are anything but shadowy, uncertain and unsatisfactory.

DECAY OF THE INDIAN TRIBES.

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The decay of the Dakotas in our midst may be dated from the time of their treaty in 1837, by which the U.S. Government acquired their lands on the East of the Mississippi River. Ceasing gradually to rely upon their own efforts for support, they looked forward with more and more anxiety to the pittance annually doled out to them in money, goods and provisions, until they have become the miserable and dependent creatures frequently seen about your streets. The policy which has been pursued to secure the land of the Indian, and then to offer him no inducement to improve his condition, has been the bane of his race. Recourse to liquor, and other evil habits, are but the natural consequences of that system which drives him from his home, interferes with his habits of life, and regards him as an outcast from the land of his fathers, without holding out to him any promise for the future.

INDIAN TRADERS—THEIR REPUTED, AND THEIR TRUE CHARACTER.

About two hundred years have elapsed since Minnesota was first explored by white men. Two Frenchmen, long before the visit of Father Hennepin to the Falls of St. Anthony, had reached the region of lakes lying Westward from Lake Superior. How far they penetrated towards the sources of the Mississippi we know not, as the information we possess, relative to their movements, is very limited. They were Indian traders, the pioneers of that bold and hardy class of men, who, despising the comforts and the seductions of civilized life, have, since that period, explored the recesses of our forests, and the wide expanse of our prairies, and gazed with rapture upon the beauty and magnificence of our lakes, while they have extended the influence of the children of Japhet, far and wide among the tribes of the Northwest.

Canada was the principal nursery of this class of adventurers, who, fascinated by the unrestrained liberty of action offered by the trade with Indians, and by the novelty connected with it, entered upon the vocation with great ardor. Stimulated less by a prospect of gain than by the excitement of new scenes, and the hope of new discoveries, the Indian trader was arrested by no difficulties or dangers, discouraged by no fatigue or

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exposure, from the accomplishments of the object he had in view. Perhaps no body of men have ever been so misunderstood and misrepresented as those of which he formed a component part. To them have been ascribed not only all the evils and outrages that are the accompaniments of extreme frontier life, where law is unfelt and unknown, but they have been charged with fraud and villainy of every conceivable description. The very accusations made against them in many cases contained their own refutation. While nothing was more certain to destroy his hopes of success in trade than a state of active hostilities between the Indians he had dealings with and other bands of savages, he has been a thousand times accused of inciting war between them. Never hesitating a moment to save a captive from violence, at any peril to his own life, or at any sacrifice of his property, he has been denounced as void of all feelings in common with civilized man, and as a mere trafficker in human blood. With too much self respect to contradict charges so absurd and improbable, and with an undue contempt for public opinion, it is not surprising that scarcely a voice has been raised, or a pen wielded in his behalf.

There is an unwritten chapter yet to be contributed to the records of the Northwest, which will place the Indian trader in a proper light before the country, while it will not seek to extenuate either his defects or vices. This is neither the time nor the place for such a production, but it will doubtless be a grateful task, and peculiarly within the province of this Society, to cause the memory of the men, who, of all others, are most intimately identified with the 464 early history of Minnesota, to be relieved from the weight of obloquy So unjustly heaped upon them.

They were a class of men eminently distinct from all others in their modes of thought and of life, and they cannot, therefore, be justly measured by the standard which obtains in civilized communities.

They were, for the most part, individuals of little or no education, but remarkable for their energy and for fidelity to their engagements. In fact, the whole system of Indian trade was necessarily based upon the personal integrity of the employer and the employed.

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Generally speaking, the former resided hundreds, or even thousands of miles distant from the place of trade, and he furnished large amounts of merchandize to his agent or clerk, for which he held no security but. his plighted faith. With the requisite number of men to perform the labor of transporting his goods and supplies in bark canoes, this trusty individual wended his way, in August or September, to the scene of operations, where he erected his wintering house, furnished his Indians with necessary clothing and ammunition, and despatched them to their hunts. In many cases his principal could obtain no knowledge of his movements until his return in the spring with the fruits of his exchanges. If a clerk, he was then paid the amount of his salary as agreed upon; if trading on his own account, the sum of his peltries was made up, and the difference between that sum and the invoice of goods furnished him added to the wages of his men, which were always paid by the principal, told the story of his profit or his loss. Furs being of no intrinsic value, but entirely subject to the fluctuations of fashion, it often happened that a poor trader, who had succeeded in the collection of an unusual number of one kind or another of the skins of fur-bearing animals, and flattered himself with the hope of having made money by his winter's operations, had that hope dispelled by finding that prices had gone down to a low figure, and that he had plunged himself into debt. In such cases the sufferer consoled himself with the hope that the next season would show a different result, and he returned to his wintering ground by no means a despondent man.

But while a departure from strict honesty on the part of the principal and clerk, one towards the other, was so rare an occurrence as to be almost unknown, no scruples were felt in taking any advantage of an opponent in trade, whether fair or unfair. There was a state of warfare perpetually existing between rival establishments in the Indian country, except in case of sickness or scarcity of provisions, when hostilities ceased for a time, and the opposite party came to the rescue of those who were in distress, and afforded every assistance possible. Such exhibitions of qualities so contradictory were characteristic of all the old class of Indian traders.

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In times of famine or of sickness among the Indians themselves, the trader was to them a ministering angel. No one was sent away unrelieved, so long as his stores lasted. The consequence of such generosity bore its legitimate fruit. The reliance of the savage upon his trader became, in the course of time, almost without limit, and he took no important step without first consulting him. The white man was the confidant. of his joys and his sorrows, and his influence was augmented in proportion. That this influence was not often used to accomplish selfish and unworthy purposes, I do not pretend to assert. That it was more frequently employed for the benefit of the Indian and of his race, I most unhesitatingly believe.

As the trader received his goods on credit, at a stipulated price above the cost,. either from individual 29 466 merchants, or from associations, so he in turn made advances to the Indian hunters, as his knowledge of their characters for honesty and skill in the chase justified him in so doing. The system of credits was adopted more or less generally throughout the Northwest, and has not entirely ceased even at this day, but it must soon come to an end, for civilization, with all its blessings, can afford no substitute for the simple Indian trader of the olden time; who, equally with honest Leatherstocking , shunned the society of his fellow white men, and above all, despised the whole machinery of the law; and the contact of the Indian with the whites has so far demoralized him as to render it unsafe longer to trust to his honesty.

SKETCHES OF SOME OF THE EARLY TRADERS.

Having indulged in these general remarks, with reference to the Indian traders, I shall proceed to particularize a very few of the class I have described, with whom it was my fortune to become personally acquainted.

Joseph Renville was one of these men, and as a memoir of him has heretofore been published in your annals, I will merely mention the fact in connection with him, that he was

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the first stock raiser of Minnesota, for more than twenty-five years ago, at Lac qui Parle, he owned sheep by the hundreds, and cattle by the score.

Louis Provencalle was a man of even less education than Renville , but like him, he was gifted with a strong natural intellect. He kept his Indian credit books by hieroglyphics, having a peculiar figure for each article of merchandise, understood only by himself, and in marking down peltries received from the Indians, he drew the form of the animal, the skin of which was to be represented. He had also a /mode of indicating the names of his Indian debtors on his 467 account books peculiar to himself. Fortunately he had mastered the mystery of figures sufficiently well to express by them the amount he wished to designate, and the general correctness of his accounts did not admit of question.

He it is of whom it is truly related, that when threatened by a band of wild Dakotas with the pillage of his goods, he seized a firebrand, and holding it within a few inches of an open keg filled with gunpowder, he declared his determination to blow them, with himself, into the air, if they seized upon a single article. It is hardly necessary to mention that his reckless conduct had the desired effect, for he suffered no further annoyance of a like kind.

Another adventure in which he participated less successfully, I have often heard the recital of from his own lips. In company with one of his own men, he was engaged in a search for an Indian camp, where he had been informed there was a large number of buffalo robes. Fatigued and hungry, they found themselves near a herd of buffalo, and not suspecting that there were Indians near, they shot a cow and brought her to the ground. The report of the guns put the animals to flight, and in a few moments, Provencalle and his companion were assailed by the Indians, knocked down, severely beaten with their bows, and otherwise maltreated. It appeared that the band of which he was in search, were about completing a *cane* , or surround, of the buffalo, the men crawling cautiously to their appointed stations, when the interference of the white men disconcerted all their arrangements, for which the punishment above detailed was summarily inflicted.

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Nevertheless, the coveted robes were secured, although the old gentleman declared he would not undergo another castigation of the same kind for all the robes in the country.

Mr. Provencalle came to this country before the close of the last century. He died at Mendota in 1850.

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Jean Baptiste Faribault is the last survivor of the old traders. He is now more than 80 years of age, and resides at Faribault, in Rice county, with his sons. He is a native of Canada, and removed to this country in 1798, 57 years ago. He enjoyed considerable advantages of education in early youth. His career in this region has been marked with more of adverse fortune than usually occurs, even in the perilous life of an Indian trader. Shortly after the close of the war with Great Britain, he was robbed by the Winnebagoes at Prairie du Chien, of a large stock of goods, for which he never received any remuneration. Some years subsequently he fixed his residence upon Pike's Island, near Fort Saint Anthony, (now Snelling,) and had barely established himself in his vocation of trader, when he was forced by the mandate of the Commandant of the Fort to abandon his buildings, and betake himself, with his moveable property, to the bottom land on the East side of the Mississippi, where he erected new tenements. The following spring, the water, which was unusually high, carried off his houses and live stock, he and his family escaping in boats, by means of which he was fortunately enabled to save his goods and furs from destruction. Still undiscouraged, he built a house at the point now known as Mendota, where he resided many years, except during the winter months, when he assumed charge of his trading post at Little Rapids on the Minnesota River.

In 1834 he narrowly escaped death from the knife of a savage Dakota, the blade of which penetrated the cavity of the lungs, and from the effects of which wound he has never entirely recovered. He is emphatically one of the pioneers of Minnesota.

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Alexis Billy , now a resident of Wabasha, is well known as one of the early settlers of the Territory, although not belonging to the same category with those 469 already mentioned. In 1821 he went to the Red River of the North with Francois Labothe , now a resident of Nicollet county, and two hired men. Mr. Bailly had in charge a herd of cattle, which were in great demand at the Colony, and commanded high prices. He and his party had several remarkable escapes from war parties of savages, who, on one occasion stole all their horses, seventeen in number. They finally reached their destination without other loss. Mr. Bailly sold milch cows at the Colony for \$100 to \$135 each, and other cattle in proportion. Returning from the North, Mr. Bailly made arrangements with the American Fur Company, whereby he was placed in charge of an extensive district of trade on the Minnesota, Cannon and Des Moines Rivers. He was also at one time connected with the Columbia Fur Company.

Joseph R. Brown has also been engaged in the Indian trade more or less continuously for more than thirty years. He is said to have brought down the first raft of pine lumber that ever descended the St. Croix River. When in the employ of the American Fur Company, at Lac Travers, in 1835, he was shot at, and severely wounded in the shoulder, by a Dakota Indian; and during the winter of the same year, Louis Provencalle , Junior, also a clerk, having charge of a trading station on the Couteau de Prairie, was barbarously murdered by one of the same band.

Benjamin F. Baker, Alexander Faribault, James Wells, Norman W. Kittson, Hazen Mooers, Philander Prescott, Augustin Rock, Joseph Laframboise and Francoise Labothe were among the prominent Indian traders of the country, when I came into it in 1834. Martin McLeod, William H. Forbes and Franklin Steele date their arrival in Minnesota in the same year, to-wit: 1837. All of these gentleman are still alive, with the single exception of Mr. Baker , who died in St. Louis in 1840.

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William A. Aitkin, Allan Morrison, Clement Beaulieu and Donald McDonald , were among the few traders with the Chippewas with whom I had an acquaintance. Hon. H. M. Rice, now delegate to Congress, came here for the first time in 1839 or 1840. He went from Fort Snelling to Prairie du Chien after a few months residence, and there engaged in trade with the Winnebago Indians, whom he accompanied to their lands on the Crow Wing River in 1847. He was extensively engaged in the trade with the Chippewas also.

VOYAGE IN MACKINAC BOATS FROM PRAIRIE DU CHIEN TO RED RIVER COLONY.

In 1820, on the 15th day of April, three Mackinac boats, manned with six hands each, laden with 200 bushels of wheat, 100 bushels of oats, and 30 bushels of peas, under the charge of Messrs. Graham & Laidlaw , left Prairie du Chien for Selkirk's colony on the Red River of the North. They were detained by ice at Lake Pepin, and the crews planted the May-pole thereon. On the third of May, the ice was sufficiently broken up to allow of the passage of the boats through the Lake. The voyage was continued up the Minnesota river to Big Stone Lake, from which a portage was made into Lake Travers, about one and a half miles distant, the boats being drawn across on wooden rollers. Traversing the latter body of water, and descending the Sioux Wood River to the Red River, the party arrived at Pembina in safety, with their charge, on the 3d day of June. Pembina was, at that time, as now, a small hamlet, the rival companies of the North West and of Hudson's Bay, having each a trading post at the confluence of the stream with the Red River, but on opposite sides. The crop at Selkirk's colony having entirely failed the previous year, the grain was much needed for seed the ensuing season, and of course commanded a high price. The trip performed in these boats is worthy of mention, as it is the only instance of heavy articles being transported the entire distance from Prairie du Chien to the Red River Settlement, with the exception of the portage between Big Stone and Travers Lakes, by water. Charles St. Antoine ,* who was one of the crew, is now a citizen of Dakota county, and is one of the few survivors of that eventful voyage. The party returned across

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the plains on foot, as far as Big Stone Lake, from which point they descended to Prairie du Chien, in canoes.

* [Mr. St. Antoine is still living, near Northfield in this State, and has been in St. Paul within a few months past, apparently hale and good for years more. W.]

INDIAN TREATIES.

The publications of the Society already contain the particulars of the visit of Lieut. Pike , to the Upper Mississippi, in 1805–6, which resulted in the acquisition by the government, from the Dakota Bands, of the first tract of land ceded by any Indian tribe within our present territorial limits. Lieut. Pike was eminently fitted for the delicate task allotted to him by President Jefferson . With his small command of twenty men, he penetrated into the midst of the powerful tribes of the Dakota and Chippewa Indians—arrested their hostile movements towards each other—negotiated a treaty of cession with the former—threatened evil disposed tribes and Indians with punishment—tore down the British flag wherever displayed, and elicited the respect and admiration of savages who were entirely under British influence, and who had but a faint knowledge of the power of the American Government. There is little doubt that, but for the impression produced by his visit, there would have been a far more powerful demonstration on the part of the Dakotas, than was really made in favor of the British government, in the war of 1812–14, during the continuance of which, Pike , then elevated to the rank of Brigadier General, lost his life while gloriously leading his army to the capture of Little York.

In 1825, and again in 1830, treaties of pacification were made by the commissioners of the United States, with the Northwestern tribes, at Prairie du Chien. In the last mentioned treaty, the grant to the Dakota half breeds, of the tract of land at Lake Pepin, was made, the settlement of the title to which, is still looked for with so much interest, by the people of the territory generally.

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In 1837, Governor Dodge , of Wisconsin, concluded a treaty at Fort Snelling, with the Chippewas, which opened to the enterprise of the white men, the great pine forests of the St. Croix and Chippewa rivers. In the same year, a delegation of Dakotas, being called to Washington city, transferred to the government by treaty, all the lands belonging to that tribe, lying east of the Mississippi river.

In the year 1841, Governor Doty , of Wisconsin, negotiated treaties on the part of the United States, at Travers des Sioux, Mendota and Wabashaw, for the purchase of about 25,000.000 of acres of the land owned by the Dakotas, on the West of the Mississippi, but the treaties failed of confirmation by the Senate. Nearly the same area was embraced in the treaties made by Messrs. Lea and Ramsey , in 1851, but as these were negotiated after the organization of the Territory, they do not come within the purview of this address.

THE BUILDING OF FORT SNELLING.

I am not able to state the number of the United States troops, who, under the command of Col. Leavenworth , first 473 occupied a spot near the mouth of the Minnesota River, in 1819. They erected temporary barracks,—the remains of which are still visible,—on the South side near the present ferry, in which they passed the winter. Daniel W. Hubbard was the first man who felled a tree on the camping ground. During the winter of 1819–20, the scurvy broke out in a most malignant form, and raged so violently that, for a few days, garrison duty was suspended, there being barely well men enough in the command to attend to the sick, and to the interment of the dead. So sudden were the attacks, that soldiers in apparent good health when they went to bed, were found dead in the morning, One man who was relieved from his tour of sentinel duty, and stretched himself upon the bench of the guard room, four hours after, when he was called upon to resume his post, was discovered to be lifeless.

Col. Leavenworth made every effort possible to arrest the disease, and he finally succeeded in doing so by administering decoctions of spruce and other vegetable

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productions, which were obtained by sending parties to the St. Croix and Chippewa Rivers. Vinegar and other antiscorbutics were also procured from Prairie du Chien, but before the remedies could be made available, nearly one-half of the command perished. The fatality caused by the land scurvy is the more unaccountable, as it was, I believe, the sole instance of its appearance in this part of the country. It was doubtless caused by the bad quality of the provisions, especially of the pork, which was spoiled by the villainy of the contractors, or their agents, in drawing the brine from the barrels that contained it, after leaving St. Louis, in order to lighten the load, and causing the barrels to be refilled with river water, before their delivery at the post, to avoid detection. The troops were compelled to live 474 on this unwholesome fare for two successive seasons, before the fraud was discovered.

In May, 1820, the command removed to Camp Coldwater, below the site of the present St. Louis House, where they remained during the summer, but the following winter was spent in their old quarters. Fort Snelling (then Fort St. Anthony) Was being built in the meanwhile; and as rapidly as rooms could be prepared, they were occupied by the troops, but the whole number could not be accommodated until 1824, when the work was finally completed. A large portion of the lumber used in its construction was cut out with whip-saws, from pine logs brought down from the Rum River, in 1821. The small saw mill near the Falls was not finished until about the same period with the Fort itself.

It is stated there was such a lack of writing paper in the Fort during 1820–21, that Lieut. Camp , commissary or quarter master, was compelled to make out his quarterly accounts for transmission to Washington, on strips of birch bark.

In 1824, Col., Snelling , who had previously arrived and assumed the command, undertook to raise wheat, wherewith to furnish flour for the troops, but the crop failed, and as a consequence the garrison were placed for three months on half rations.

THE TROUBLES OF 1827.

The amicable relations existing between the government officers and the Dakotas, received a severe shock in 1827. A party of Chippewas having descended the Mississippi, on a visit to the commanding officer of the Fort, were allowed to encamp on the outside of the walls, and under the protection of the guns. During the night they were fired upon by a small number of Dakotas, and two of their party wounded. Col. Snelling was informed of the outrage, 475 and on the following morning he paraded his men under arms, marched toward the prairie, where a large number of the Dakotas were assembled, and seized some of the principal men as hostages, for the surrender of the guilty parties, and placed them under guard. During the next day, three of the young men, said to have participated in the night attack, were brought in and delivered up. They were immediately turned over to the Chippewas, who put them to death in the presence of the troops; and two days after a fourth, having also been surrendered, met a like fate. The bodies were suffered to remain where they fell, without burial, until, becoming offensive, they were thrown over the steep bluff, near the Fort. It subsequently appeared that but two out of the four were really guilty. One of the innocent men had sacrificed himself to shield his brother, who was a mere boy, and the other was not of the attacking party. The excitement which was produced by so unusual a proceeding, was prodigious, not only among the Dakotas, but among their white friends in the country. The commandant was charged with unjustifiable haste in the summary execution of innocent men, and for a short time there was a fair prospect of an Indian war. Col. Snelling justified the steps he had taken, on the ground that the American flag had been insulted, by the violence offered to Indians under its immediate protection, and it was his duty to punish the offenders.

As a mere question of policy, there is no doubt that Col. Snelling committed a grave error, in sacrificing four Dakota lives as an atonement for the wounding of two Chippewas, both of whom recovered. True, the severity of the measure tended to prevent future outbreaks of a like kind, in the immediate vicinity of the Fort, but it also excited a far deeper exasperation in the minds of the Dakotas against their hereditary enemies the

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Chippewas, and a 476 spirit of revenge against the soldiers, both of which found vent in blood.

Many a Chippewa scalp was torn from the reeking head by the friends of the victims, which, but for their unhappy fate, would have remained where Providence had placed it—and a number of American soldiers, supposed by their officers and comrades, to have shamefully deserted their colors, had in reality been ruthlessly slain, and their bodies concealed by Dakota hands.

Several of such cases were brought to light in after years, by the traders, and avowed by the Indians themselves. One soldier was shot, and his body secreted near Lake Calhoun, another was disposed of in like manner, about two miles below Mendota—and I myself discovered the skeleton of a white man, not far from my present place of residence, which bore the mark of a bullet in the skull, and which was recognized as the remains of a soldier, by the strips of clothing found in the immediate vicinity. On one occasion, Alexander Faribault, while descending the Mississippi in a boat, in company with others, found, at the head of Lake Pepin, four dead bodies of soldiers, partly devoured by birds of prey. The fate of these men elicited but little sympathy, for they were engaged in all attempt to desert, when they were set upon and butchered, by certain Dakotas of the Red Wing Band.

Other instances no doubt occurred of the same kind, for the desire of revenge when once aroused in the savage breast, is not easily satiated.

Our fellow Citizen, Joseph R. Brown, was at Lake Travers, when the Dakotas were delivered over to the Chippewas for execution, and on his way back he narrowly escaped death, at Lac qui Parle, Travers de Sioux and Six's Village, it being the avowed intention of the friends of the victims to destroy him.

BEGINNING OF STEAM NAVIGATION.

The first steamer that ever ascended the Upper Mississippi to Fort Snelling, was the "Virginia," a stern wheeled boat, which arrived at the post in the early part of May, 1823. It is related, that a sentinel on duty first heard the sound made by the escaping steam, before the boat was discernible. He cried out most vociferously, and when officers and men crowded around him for information, it happened that the sounds were no longer audible. The poor fellow was in imminent danger of being put raider guard, when the "Virginia" made her appearance, and her arrival was greeted by the booming of cannon and by shouts of welcome from the whole command.

Previous to the introduction of steamers upon the waters of the Upper Mississippi, keel boats were used exclusively for the transportation of troops and supplies. Sixty days time from St. Louis to Fort Snelling, was considered a good average trip.

MISSIONARY OPERATIONS.

Samuel W. Pond and Gideon H. Pond , both of whom are now highly respected preachers of the gospel in Minnesota, came to this country in the spring of 1834, from New England. They resided with the Lake Calhoun Band of Dakotas for some time, teaching them how properly to cultivate the soil, while they at the same time endeavored to instil into the minds of these savages the truths of the Christian Religion. This attempt may be considered as the germ of modern missionary enterprise in this Territory. Dr. Williamson was sent out with Mr. Huggins in 1835, by the A. B. C. F. M., and a station was formed at Lac qui Parle. S. R. Riggs followed a short time after, and commenced operations at Travers de Sioux, but he was subsequently replaced at that point by Mr. Hopkins , Mr. R's presence being 478 required at Lac qui Parle. Dr. Williamson removed to Kaposia, a few miles below St. Paul, and commenced his labors there. Messrs. Denton and Gavin were despatched to this missionary field by a Swiss Society. Their sphere of operations was principally confined to the Red Wing Band of Dakotas, but their efforts were soon

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discontinued. Mr. Denton is now a citizen of Illinois, while his associate was ordered by the Society to which he was attached, to take up his residence among the New York Indians. The Catholic denomination have confined their labors to the Winnebagoes, they never having made any locations in the Dakota country.

The missionaries have zealously devoted themselves to the work allotted to them, but it is to be regretted that there has been no good result produced in the Northwest, except at particular points, commensurate with the amount of money expended and the labor bestowed upon the enterprise.

PIONEER LUMBERMEN.

The lumber trade, now so important in its character, may be said to have been originated in 1839 or 1840, when Orange Walker and his partners, erected the Marine mill on the St. Croix River. They were followed by John McKusick , who built a saw mill at Stillwater, in 1844, and by Mowers and Loomis, who commenced the Arcola mills about the same time. These gentlemen, with Elam Greeley and the brothers Taylor , were the pioneers of the commerce in pine lumber in Minnesota.

PIONEER FARMERS.

Messrs. Haskell and Norris are entitled to be considered the first farmers who made Minnesota their home, and who demonstrated that our lands are equal to any other in the 479 West for the production of the cereals, a fact which was denied not only By men not resident in the territory, but by individuals among us. The agricultural and lumber interests are to be the great levers to raise us in our career of prosperity, and the originators of each, the men "who have borne the burthen and heat of the day," should be remembered with honor, in the history of Minnesota.

VISITS OF NOTABLE CHARACTERS.

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Since the establishment of Fort Snelling, this region has been visited at various times by men distinguished for their public position, or for their literary or scientific attainments.

In 1820, Lewis Cass , with a small party, traversed Lake Superior in a bark canoe, under the orders of the Government, made the portage to Sandy Lake, and after various explorations, during which he visited the fine body of water that bears his name, he descended the Mississippi to the mouth of the Wisconsin River.

In 1823, Major S. H. Long , with a few scientific men and an escort of soldiers, explored the valley of the Minnesota, and the country lying between the sources of that stream and Pembina, where, or rather near which point he designated the line of 49° North latitude, between the United States Territories and the British Possessions, by fixing a prominent post, with suitable inscriptions, deep in the earth.

Henry R. Schoolcraft . in 1832, was placed in charge of an expedition, by the Government, to examine the region between Lake Superior and the Mississippi. On this trip he discovered the source of the Great Father of waters—Itasca Lake. He also added much other valuable information to what was known of the valley of the Mississippi, and of its tributary streams.

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Jean N. Nicollet , the man to whose labors this Territory is so deeply indebted, first visited it in 1835. When in the employ of the Government in 1839, he came across from Fort Pierre on the Missouri, to Mendota, and with him was John C. Fremont , that being the first experience of the latter in prairie life. They were my guests for several weeks, and Fremont then accompanied me on one of my annual hunting excursions with the Indians, to the Red Cedar River, from whence I conducted him to Prairie du Chien.

In the same year, George Catlin made his appearance, a man whose work on the North American Indians produced much sensation in this country, as well as in Europe. Of all

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those who have visited the wilds of the Northwest, no one was received with greater attention than George Catlin , by resident white men, and no one deserved it so little as he did.

His intention to devote a long time to the study of Indian life and character, and his eminent fitness for such an undertaking were made the subject of frequent editorials in the columns of the New York Commercial Advertiser, then under the charge of Col. Stone , and of other leading prints. According to their representations, the reading world was at length to be blessed with such a production as the interest and importance of the subject required. Being furnished with letters to military officers and civilians on the frontier he was aided in every manner possible. His object in coming here was to visit the Pipe Stone Quarry, and I furnished horses, without charge, for himself and his companion, Mr. Wood , an English gentleman of intelligence, provided them with a trusty Indian guide, and gave them also letters to the gentlemen at the head of my trading posts on the route, which rendered it quite certain that they would meet with no impediment from the Indians. They were questioned by the Dakotas at Traverse des Sioux, as to their intentions, but, through the interference of Mr. Provencalle at that station, they were allowed to proceed without molestation. To judge from Catlin's description of the trip one would suppose that he had been kept close prisoner for some time, and that nothing but his own heroic daring saved him from being devoured by a band of bloodthirsty savages. His letters purporting to have been written at the Pipe Stone Quarry, but which did not appear in the New York papers until after his departure from the Upper Mississippi, contained severe reflections upon the military and upon traders alike, because the Indians were not better tutored than, to interfere with an American citizen in his passage through their country. His letters abounded with mis-statements, and the voluminous work subsequently produced by him was equal to them in that respect. The people in this quarter were absolutely astounded at his misrepresentations of men and things. There is but one redeeming feature in his book, and that is, his sketches of indian faces and scenes, which are sufficiently faithful,

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he was skillful in that line, and his pencil could not, therefore, like his pen, vary much from the truth.

He was followed, during the same season, by G. W Featherstonahugh , who styled himself U.S. Geologist, then on his way to the head of the St. Peters or Minnesota River. His appearance and manners were ill calculated to ensure him a favorable reception among plain republicans. He was both aristocratic and conceited. His productions are characterized by abuse of American society and of particular individuals. All the information embodied in it of any value to Minnesota, was the result of the labor of Lient. Mather , a scientific officer, who accompanied him, but to whom he vouchsafed no credit whatever in his printed volumes. 30

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Capt. Marryatt , an English naval officer, known as the author of Peter Simple, and other works of fiction, arrived at Mendota in 1837, and was my visitor for several weeks. He had little of the gentleman either in his manners or appearance, nor can reliance be placed upon his statements of facts in his printed work. Like Featherstonhaugh , he was a thorough aristocrat in feeling, and like him, he manifested anything but friendship for the United States and its institutions.

HISTORIC SKETCH OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT.

The first move in Congress for the establishment of a temporary Government in Minnesota, took place during the session of 1846–7. A Bill for that purpose was introduced in the House of Representatives by Morgan L. Martin , Delegate from Wisconsin, in anticipation of the admission of the State of Wisconsin into the Union, which Bill was referred to the Committee on Territories, Mr. Douglas being the Chairman. It happened that I was in Washington at the time the bill was discussed in Committee, and I was consulted by Mr. Martin as to the propriety of the name, he stating that there had been four names proposed by different members, to wit: "Minnesota," as in the original bill, "Itasca,"

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“Algonquin” and “Chippewa.” I urged him to use his best efforts to retain the name, it being the Indian term to designate the principal river which took its rise and debouched within the proposed territorial limits, and was therefore in accordance with the precedent set in other cases,—and he promised to do so. The Committee reported in favor of the Bill, with the change of Minnesota to Itasca, and with material alternations in the Eastern boundary. When it came up for consideration in the House, HOUSTON, of Delaware, proposed “Washington” as the name 483 of the new Territory; Thompson , of Mississippi, was in favor of “Jackson,” while Winthrop , of Massachusetts, manifested much anxiety for the adoption of “Chippewa,” in lieu of “Itasca.” The effect of so much diversity of opinion on the part of prominent members, was to cause the House to agree without a count, to the motion of Mr. Martin , who proposed to substitute “Minnesota.” The Bill, thus amended, passed the House, but was lost in the Senate.

The admission of the State of Wisconsin was not effected without a severe struggle in fixing the Northwestern boundary. Some members were in favor of a line drawn due West from Lake Superior to the Mississippi, others advocated Rum river, others the St. Croix, and still others the line from Rush river of Lake Pepin to Lake Snperior. The adoption of either of the two first mentioned would have been attended with calamitous results to the Territory, by excluding from its limits all the region East of the Mississippi below, and more or less of that above the Falls of St. Anthony. The Rush river line was by far the most just and reasonable, as it would have left the whole St. Croix valley, which is identical in interest, within the same political organization, instead of being divided as it now is. The utmost that could be obtained by the friends of the Territory, was the St. Croix line, and we have great reason to be thankful to them that we were not delivered over entirely to the mercies of our Wisconsin neighbors, whose affections for us were so great that they would willingly have swallowed all of us who resided on the East side of the river without manifesting' any fear of nausea or indigestion.

In 1848, the people of the residuum of Wisconsin, not included within the state organization, determined to assert their rights to be represented in Congress, and they

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were aided by those who lived on the West side of the Mississippi. 484 The first meeting of which I have any knowledge, for the agitation of the subject, was held in Henry Jackson's building, on Bench street, he himself, Auguste Larpenteur, Alexander Mcleod, J. W. Bass, David Lambert, James McC. Boal , and several others being present. There were appointed a chairman and secretary, some speeches were made, and resolutions passed in favor of a convention of the people. I think the meeting was held in May or June, 1848. Next came the meeting at Stillwater, of August 4th, in the same year, which was attended by sundry citizens of that town, and by others from St. Paul. Franklin Steele and myself were the sole individuals present from the West of the Mississippi. Some twenty of us signed the call for the convention, which was held on the 18th of the same month, at Stillwater, and which was attended by sixty-two delegates from different parts of the Territory. With the proceedings of that convention most of you are familiar. I have in my possession the original petition to Congress of that body, signed by all the delegates, and it is my intention to present it to the Society as a valuable memento of the past.

The election of a delegate to Congress, from Wisconsin Territory—the struggle to obtain his seat—the successful issue—and the other preliminaries to the political birth of our beautiful Minnesota—these are subjects upon which it is not for me to comment, as I was the delegate when the Territory was organized. Let it suffice to say, that we owe much to the men from both of the great sections of the Union, who gave their votes in our favor, at a time when the questions connected with California, and the other territories acquired from Mexico, had produced a state of feeling between the North and the South, which augured ill for the success of an attempt to procure the 485 establishment of a Territorial government in any quarter of the Union.

PERSONAL AND FINAL.

I have now discharged the duty you have been pleased to devolve upon me, in my own imperfect manner. I might prolong this address to an indefinite extent, by details of personal adventures, and of incidents of wild life in the West. But I have already

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trespassed too much upon your time and patience, and I close with the single remark, that I may, at no distant day, so far comply with the wishes of some of my friends, as to lay before the public the results of my experience and observation since my arrival in this country, with such other facts as may be connected with the history of the Northwest.